

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

FISHER'S BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY.—By GEORGE P. FISHER, D.D., Svo. pp. 352. Scribner, Armstrong, & Company.

In the composition of this volume, the character of a treatise on classical antiquity is combined with that of a discourse on Christian theology. The last-named subject forms the central point of the work; but the questions which it presents are treated in a large and generous spirit; evincing a warmer interest in scholarly discussion than in dogmatic speculation. Professor Fisher announces his purpose of considering, first, the condition of the ancient Roman world at the time of the establishment of Christianity; second, the original documents of the New Testament from which our knowledge of the beginnings of the Christian religion is derived; and third, some of the most important topics connected with the life of Jesus and the Apostolic age. In the execution of his plan, the author exhibits his characteristic soundness of judgment, variety of learning, and spiciness of illustration; while he firmly adheres to the traditions of the ancient faith, he is familiar with the results of the most recent critical research; and without avoiding the discussion of controverted points, he treats the views most widely opposite to his own with uniform justice and courtesy.

The chapters devoted to the Roman world are among the most interesting in the volume both to the classical student and the general reader. Professor Fisher has caught the true spirit of antiquity, and reproduces it in its relation to Christian thought, in a fresh and impressive form. There is an affinity, he maintains, between the noblest products of ancient philosophy and poetry, and the authentic teachings of Divine Revelation. This was fully recognized by the most profound thinkers among the Fathers of the Church. Justin Martyr affirms that Socrates was enlightened by the Word of God, and anticipated in part the teachings of Christ. Augustine declares that Christianity is as old as the creation, and he drew inspiration from the writings of Plato and Cicero. It has been a common mistake, the author remarks, to look upon Christianity too exclusively as a doctrinal system. Revelation has been regarded as a communication let down from the skies in writing, as the Sibylline books were said to have been conveyed to Tarquin. Or, men have considered Christianity as a body of doctrine, like the philosophical system of Plato, a creation of the human intellect, dealing with the problems of human life and destiny.

This error finds no tolerance at the hands of the author. Revelation, he contends, is historical at the core. The supernatural element does not exclude the natural. Miracle is not magic. The groundwork of revelation is in laws, institutions, providential guidance, over and above teaching. The doctrinal element is not a thing independent, purely theoretical, disengaged from the realities of life and history. The final cause of revelation is the recovery of men to true religion. Whatever knowledge is communicated is tributary to this end. Hence the grand aim of all revelation is not the production of a book, but the training of a people. The Scriptures are the record of this process of training. The heathen religions, according to the author, did not spring out of a mere scientific curiosity, but from the sense of the supernatural, the longing for a higher communion, which is native to the soul. These innate sentiments lie at the root of religion, even in its cruder forms. In the religion of the Greeks and Romans, beneath its fanciful mythology, there were concealed the elements of affinity with the Christian revelation. It embodied the sentiments of reverence, gratitude, dependence, adoration, the spirit of prayer and supplication to the Divine Power. In the heathen devotions, there was a seeking after God. The subjective elements which belong to religion could not obtain their true development until the one object worthy of them was revealed in his Divine attributes. The tendency toward monotheism, which was due to the necessities of moral and religious feeling, is discerned from the Homeric days, and increases in strength as we advance toward the Christian era.

The Jewish hope regard to the coming of the Messiah is the subject of an interesting chapter. As described by the author, it included the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom in a time of general distress and calamity. Nature herself was to bear witness by miraculously terrible phenomena, to the impending crisis. The sun and the moon were to be hid in darkness. Swords would be seen brandishing in the sky. The Son of Man was to be preceded by the reappearing of Elijah, the stern and solemn prophet of the ancient covenant. The Messiah himself would arise enthroned with special gifts and power from God. The opposing heathen would be crushed under his feet. Jerusalem would be restored to its pristine glory. The scattered Jews would be brought back, and a new kingdom, embracing all mankind, would be erected. It was to be an era of joy and plenty, of holiness and peace. In this term, according to many, the kingdom was to continue forever. Others supposed that it was to be of limited duration, introductory to a renewal of the heavens and the earth, which the Messianic kingdom was to usher in. At this point, the general revolution was to occur, the last judgment, and the eternal award of happiness or misery.

The influence of this hope on the conceptions of the writers of the early Evangelical history, which has been so fruitful a subject of discussion among leading European Biblical critics, is passed over with little attention from the author, who evidently has no faith in the construction which it has received from writers of the Tübingen school, and others of a similar stamp. He dwells more at length on the expectations of the Apostles in regard to the second coming of Christ, as they are declared in the narratives of the New Testament. The disciples during the life-time of their Master, he affirms, shared in the prevalent expectation of a Messianic kingdom of visible power and majesty. They were so firmly wedded to their conceptions of the kingdom that they could not entertain the belief that Christ was to suffer and die. His assurances on this topic fell on deaf ears. Hence after his death, it was natural that they should linger with eager interest upon his words relative to his second coming. Then, if not before, the glory of the Messiah would be fully displayed. This event thus became the object of their fondest anticipations. Their yearning for their absent Master mingled with the conviction that there was to be a signal manifestation of power in connection with the work of the Messiah. Every hour's delay was a postponement of a wish that pined for fulfillment. The day could not be distant when they would rejoice once more in his visible presence.

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This hope, mistaken as it was, was not extinguished by the disappointment of it in the first age of Christianity; it was expressed by most of the Fathers of the second century; nor was until the time of Origen, who died in 254, that the idea was suggested that the Gospel by its own moral and spiritual power would overcome heathenism in the Roman Empire. It is by no means strange then, Professor Fisher argues, that this expectation should tingue the phraseology in which the Evangelists record the prophetic utterances of Christ. No verbal exactness can be claimed for their reports. The teachings of Jesus were transmitted by word of mouth before they were embodied in a written form. His sayings are often condensed, and not presented in the precise order in which they were uttered.

The connection between the second coming of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem as described in the first two Gospels, is ably argued by the author, as a proof that they could not have been written subsequent to that event. The language of Luke is not such as to compel this conclusion with regard to the third Gospel; but it may safely be affirmed that it was written not far from the date when Jerusalem was captured by Titus.

The practical application of the critical principles discussed in the volume, to the life and character of Jesus, forms the concluding portion, and presents topics of signal interest in the present state of thought in the Christian world. Professor Fisher has evidently no dread of the frosty discussion as related to the cause of religious truth. If he finds it necessary to make a concession to the progress of modern inquiry, it is made without shrinking, without timidity, without wrath,

but with frankness and good-will. On the other hand, he exhibits no love of innovation. He is not attracted by new theories on their own account. His passion for truth often finds full content in the teachings of the past. He might, perhaps, have given more prominence to some vital questions of present concern, but he never avoids discussion through desire of concealment or dread of consequences. The literary style of the work is admirable, betraying a mind amply stored with the fruits of good learning, cultivated by intimacy with the best models of composition, and addicted to the art of expression in the most strenuous search for truth. If the conclusions of the author should not always find acceptance with students, no less truth-loving and earnest than himself, they will not fail to recognize his rare scholarship, his masterly intellectual force, and his singular justness of treatment, in the discussion of opinions.

CARDINALE AND OTHER COMIC ART IN ALL TIMES AND PLACES.—By JAMES PARSONS. Svo. pp. 320. Harper & Brothers.

Out of the great mass of insipid, indecent, and malignant caricatures which are found in greater or less abundance in the floating literature of all nations, Mr. Parsons has selected some of the specimens most worthy of preservation, and embodied them in this curious and amusing volume. The pictorial representations are accompanied with historical sketches and illustrations, biographical notices, and comic anecdotes and narratives, forming a work equally suitable for light reading and for grave instruction.

THE REV. JOSEPH COOK AS A BIOLOGIST.

In spite of the applause with which the Rev. Joseph Cook's lectures on Biology in Boston, were received by the most enlightened, cultivated, philosophical, and religious audience in the country, with the addition of "more brains" than any other, which ought to have enabled them to distinguish between roses and peacock feathers, the accomplished lecturer does not appear to have met with the cordial response from the church militant which he represents, that was due to the profundity of his learning and the fervor of his eloquence. The January number of the *New-Englander*, for instance, just issued at New-Haven under the venerable shade of Yale College, has a paper by an "eminent Naturalist of orthodox opinions in religion," who will probably be identified as one of the most conspicuous scientific men in the vicinity of Boston, but who does not exercise any oppressive sense (such as Mr. Cook's Boston publisher vainly attempted to express by all the resources of the "art typographical") of the value of his recent contributions to the cause of either biology or religion. According to the *New-Englander*, the volume on "Biology" belongs to the class referred to by Mr. Andrew Fuller as "ever had for blessing and ever guide for baulking." Of the paragraphs which have received such distinguished approval from the audience in Boston, with so "many brains" and such "broad scholarship," the writer says: "Some of them appear to be bold truisms or platitudes, and one comes near to being a recommendation of a particular physician. On the other hand, a fling at a certain New-York journalist elicited an applause accompanied by laughter."

"It is equally accorded to philosophy of very dubious orthodoxy, such as the suggested immortality of brute animals, to more than doubtful scientific statements, and to rhetorical cantibus."

"*Born's Housekeeping*," by the author of "Six Little Cooks" (svo. pp. 275), Jansen, McClurg & Co., is a disguised cook-book, and a very clever one, too. It is intended for girls in their early teens, and so appetizing are the recipes, even in black and white, that they would almost turn an anchovy into a cook. In short, one can't look over the book without getting hungry.

The "Women's World Stories," collected and arranged by Maria Parker and Margaret Deane (svo. pp. 292, G. P. Putnam's Sons), are a charming mixture of quaint tales from the German, French, Hebrew, Hindoo, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Swedish, and Turkish. Some are so weird as to induce what young persons will rejoice in the book; and the tales are such as will direct budding imaginations in delicate and charming ways.

"Iles of the Sea" (svo. pp. 374, Lee & Shepard) is one of Oliver Optic's innumerable boy-charmers. It continues and ends the "Young America" series, and is crammed with sea adventures, information ingeniously given, and heartily, mirthfully feeding.

"The Two Supercharges," by W. H. G. Kingston, (svo. pp. 298), J. B. Lippincott, is a reprint of an

earlier work by the same author.

"The Two Supercharges," is also a boy's book and deals with adventures in savage Africa, which is an enchanted land to the average "young barbarian" of America.

Elephants, big snakes, savages, pirates, monkeys and other uncomfortable companions appear and disappear with startling rapidity and very unevenly manners. The boys of the book are continually in delightfully horrid danger and end by finding the usual good fortune.

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